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Arthur Rose, *All Dressed Up*, 1917

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Script Source: Transcription

This script is a transcription from a manuscript which is part of their Lord Chamberlain's collection at the British Library. The script has been transcribed by a volunteer on the Great War Theatre project and we are grateful for the time and effort they have given to make this text available.

All dressed up ----

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By

ARTHUR ROSE

The property of:

Arthur Rose

c/o Lake's Agency

1a Southampton Row

London W.C.

1

CHARACTERS

---@@---

SALLY

BILLY

JIM

CUSTOMER

POSTMAN

BANANA

---@@@---

CARRY ON

---@@@---

SCENE: - A SMALL CHAMBER, REPRESENTING THE PARLOUR AT THE BACK OF A GREENGROCER'S SHOP. THERE IS A DOOR C., THROUGH THE GLASS PANELS OF WHICH THE AUDIENCE CAN SEE INTO THE SHOP. WHEN THIS DOOR IS OPEN, THE AUDIENCE SEE PART OF THE COUNTER SURROUNDED BY MARKET-BASKETS AND BINS OF GREENGROCERIES, AND BEHIND THESE HANGS A CLOTH BACKING REPRESENTING THE INSIDE OF THE SHOP WINDOW. THERE IS A DOOR L. LEADING TO BEDROOM AND A DOOR R. LEADING TO LEADING TO A YARD. THE LATTER DOOR IS IN TWO HALVES, A TOP HALF AND A BOTTOM HALF. THE TOP HALF IS HOOKED BACK, AND THE BOTTOM HALF IS TOPPED WITH A SMALL LEDGE. IN THE YARD, WHICH IS BUT LITTLE SEEN, IS SUPPOSED TO BE A VEGETABLE STORE AND A DONKEY'S STABLE. THE PARLOUR REPRESENTS THE LIVING ROOM OF ITS TENANTS. ITS FURNITURE IS CHARACTERISTIC OF A COSTERMONGER'S HOME. BLOW THE DOOR L. IS A DRESSER FULL OF CROCKERY, AND ON THE BOTTOM SHELVES ARE VARIOUS CULINARY UTENSILS. IN THE L. CORNER IS A SMALL COOKING STOVE. TO THE R. OF THIS STOVE IS A HOME-MADE PANTRY, FRONTED WITH PERFORATED ZINC. L. C. IS A SMALL KITCHEN TABLE. JUST R. OF THE C. DOOR IS A SMALL TABLE, ON WHICH IS A MEDIUM-SIZED BALANCED MIRROR. R. OF THIS TABLE IS A CHEST OF DRAWERS, ON WHICH IS A HUGE ROUND CARDBOARD HAT-BOX. JUST BELOW THE DOOR R., A DONKEY'S BRIDLE AND PART OF A HARNESS HANGS ON THE WALL. OTHER PARTS OF THE WALLS ARE ADORNED BY CHEAP PRINTS OF POULAR WAR PICTURES. BUT THE OUTSTANDING PICTURE IS THAT OF AN ENLARGEMENT PHOTOGRAPH OF A STURDY TOMMY IN FULL KIT HANGING ON BACK WALL R. C.

(A PLAN OF THE SCENE IS APPENDED)

(THE CURTAIN RISES TO THE ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENT OF "KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING". THE CUSTOMER IS SEEN TO ENTER THE SHOP. HE STANDS BY COUNTER BEHIND THE GLASS-PANELLED DOOR. AFTER A LOOK TOWARDS THE DOOR, HE RAPS ON THE COUNTER WITH A COIN AND THEN CALLS OUT "SHOP" IN A LOUD VOICE. AS NO ONE COMES, HE REPEATS RAPPING AND SHOUTING IMPATIENTLY. THEN HE OPENS C. DOOR, STICKS

HIS HEAD IN AND CALLS OUT. HE IS A SHABBY OLD BUFFER WITH HEARTY LUNGS.)

CUSTOMER: Hi! Ain't there no one serving in this bloomin' shop!

(ENTER SALLY FROM DOOR R. SHE IS A HANDSOME WOMAN OF ABOUT 30, WEARING A PLAIN SKIRT, A COTTON BLOUSE WELL OPEN AT THE NECK AND A HOUSE APRON. COMING HASTILY FROM HER WASH-TUB IN ANSWER TO THE STENTORIAN CALL OF THE CUSTOMER, SHE ENTERS USING HER APRON TO WIPE THE SOAP-SUDS FROM HER HANDS AND ARMS.)

SALLY: Hullo! Hullo! Wot's all the bloomin' row about!

CUSTOMER: (REMAINING IN DOORWAY THROUGHOUT THE SCENE, THE DOOR BEING OPEN) It's only me.

SALLY: I thought it was a fog 'orn.

CUSTOMER: I was only hollerin' out "shop".

SALLY: Was all that noise comin' out o' your face?

CUSTOMER: Well. I want to get served.

SALLY: You needn't bust yer wind-bag about it!

CUSTOMER: I want to buy a pound o' rhubub.

SALLY: I thought yer wanted to buy the shop.

CUSTOMER: And I want a'porth o' parsley and 'aporth o' mint.

SALLY: Lumme, a shippin' order!

CUSTOMER: And I want to know if you got any taters.

SALLY: Any wot?

CUSTOMER: Taters!

SALLY: D'you mean them round things wot people used to eat for dinner in olden times?

CUSTOMER: I mean taters!

SALLY: T.A.T.E.R.S.?

CUSTOMER: Yus! Taters! TATERS!

SALLY: I 'eard yer! Taters! Well, we ain't got none.

CUSTOMER: No taters again!

SALLY: No! This is a greengrocer's, not a curiosity shop. (SHE BUSIES HERSELF WITH HOUSE WORK)

CUSTOMER: It'd be more like a curiosity shop if it had some o' the things we want in it.

SALLY: Well, it's pretty like a curiosity shop wi' you in it. (SHE CONTINUES HER HOUSE WORK THROUGHOUT SCENE.)

CUSTOMER: And it's a bit of a curiosity shop wiv your moke outside eatin' up all yer carrots.

SALLY: What! (SHE RUNS TO DOOR R. AND SHOUTS THROUGH IT) Jim, look arter Banana, 'e's eatin' the carrots agin!! (SHE GOES BACK TO HER WORK.)

CUSTOMER: Banana! Who's Banana?

SALLY: Our donkey.

CUSTOMER: A donkey wiv the name o' Banana?

SALLY: Yus, a donkey wiv the name o' Banana!

CUSTOMER: Whatever made yer give a donkey the name o' Banana?

SALLY: 'Cos we bought 'im down the Strand.

(CUSTOMER LAUGHS)

And d'yer know wot we'd a' named 'im if we'd a' bought 'im off you?

CUSTOMER: No. Wot?

SALLY: Silly ass!

CUSTOMER: D'yer think that's funny?

SALLY: No, but it's true.

CUSTOMER: Clever, ain't yer!

SALLY: Yus, I was born like it.

CUSTOMER: Now, are yer goin' to let me 'ave some taters?

SALLY: Yus, you can 'ave an ounce o' taters if yer take a ton o' cabbages.

CUSTOMER: I never eat cabbages.

SALLY: Well yer can decorate yer 'ouse wiv 'em.

CUSTOMER: If I can't 'ave taters, 'ave yer got any swedes?

SALLY: Swedes swedes everywhere, but not a blessed tater!

CUSTOMER: Then I'll take some swedes.

SALLY: How many?

CUSTOMER: Two pints.

SALLY: Two pints! My lad, this ain't a four-ale bar.

CUSTOMER: Well, two pound.

SALLY: (SHOUTS THROUGH TO JIM): Jim, come and serve two pounds o' swedes for Banana's grandfather.

CUSTOMER: (CONCILIATING): Now, don't be nasty.

SALLY: All right, old 'un, I'm only kiddin'.

CUSTOMER: Any news from your 'ole man?

SALLY: 'E's comin' 'ome on leave to-day.

CUSTOMER: Good on yer! So long, Missus.

SALLY: Jim'll serve yer.

(HE RETIRES THROUGH SHOP.)

(MUSIC. ENTER BILLY. HE COMES THROUGH SHOP AND IN AT DOOR C. A BRIGHT LITTLE LAD OF ABOUT 8, HE IS DRESSED IN A WORN OUT SUIT CHARACTERISTIC OF SLUM CHILDREN WHO PLAY THEIR GAMES IN THE GUTTER. COMING STRAIGHT FROM HIS GAME OF SOLDIERS, HE WEARS

NEWSPAPER LEGGINGS TIED ROUND WITH BITS OF STRING, A NEWSPAPER HAT, A BIT OF CORD FOR A BELT IN WHICH ARE A WOODEN DAGGER AND A WOODEN SWORD. A CORNED-BEEF TIN IS SUSPENDED BY TAPE DRUM-WISE FROM HIS NECK, AND TWO PIECES OF FIREWOOD, ONE IN EACH HAND, FORM HIS DRUM-STICKS. HE ENTERS TO THE ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENT (PP) OF "THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME". THE MUSIC SWELLS A LITTLE TO PLAY HIM WELL ON. HE SINGS OUT:)

BILLY: 'Ere I am, Mum! (AND MARCHES ROUND IN STEP WITH THE MUSIC, BEATING HIS TIN DRUM, WATCHED ADMIRINGLY AND LOVINGLY BY SALLY, HIS MOTHER.)

SALLY: (CRIES OUT) Halt! Drums off! Billy, come and salute yer muvver! (AND HE COMES TO A STANDSTILL AT ATTENTION. SHE CATCHES HIM UP IN HER ARMS, KISSES HIM, SITS WITH HIM ASTRIDE HER KNEES AND ADMIRES HIM.) Billy, to-day's the day wot yer farver's comin' 'ome on leave!

BILLY: Yus, Mum!

SALLY: Ain't yer glad?

BILLY: No'rarf!

SALLY: (STANDING HIM DOWN IN FRONT OF ENLARGEMENT PHOTOGRAPH) There he is, show us 'ow yer goin' to salute 'im!

(BILLY, STANDING AT ATTENTION WITH BACK TO AUDIENCE AND FACING PICTURE, COMES TO THE SALUTE.)

SALLY: Don't forget yer dad's a sergeant, so do it smart.

BILLY: (SALUTES AGAIN) That berrer?

SALLY: Yus. D'yer know the drill wot I taught yer?

BILLY: Yes, mum.

SALLY: Let's put yer through it to see if yer do know it.

BILLY: (TURNING SMARTLY) Right, mum!

SALLY: And don't you make no mistakes when yer dad puts yer through it.

BILLY: No, mum.

SALLY: Or I'll put yer through it! (SHAKING FIST PLAYFULLY AT HIM) Ready!

(BILLY DRAWS HIS SWORD

'Tion!

(BILLY STIFFENS UP)

Stick yer chest out!

(BILLY DOES SO EXAGGERATEDLY)

Shoulders back!

(BILLY PUTS HIS SHOULDERS WELL BACK)

'Eels together!

(BILLY CLICKS HIS HEELS TOGETHER)

'Tion!

(BILLY BECOMES RIGID)

Form fours! (SHE GIVES EACH WORD OF COMMAND WITH CHARACTERISTIC SHARP BELLOW)

(BILLY TAKES THE STEPS TO FORM FOURS)

As yer was!

(BILLY REVERSES THE STEPS)

Stand at ease! Quick march!

(BILLY AGAIN MARCHES IN TIME TO THE MUSIC)

By the right, left wheel! Halt! Stand at ease!

(BILLY RELAXES)

As yer was!

(BILLY STIFFENS UP)

Prepare to go over the top! (SHE PLACES FOUR CHAIRS IN A ROW L.) There's the Germans. Ready!

(BILLY GRASPS HIS WOODEN SWORD IN ONE HAND AND DAGGER IN THE OTHER)

Charge!

(BILLY DASHES AT THE CHAIRS AND BOISTEROUSLY OVERTURNS THEM ALL, WHILE SHOUTING "VICTORY".)

(SALLY LAUGHS AND THEN CATCHES HIM UP IN HER ARMS AGAIN)

Bravo!

BILLY: I killed the lot of 'em!

SALLY: (STILL HOLDING HIM) If yer do it like that yer dad'll gi' yer a stripe on yer arm.

BILLY: But s'pose I make a mistake?

SALLY: Then I'll gi' yer a stripe on yer ... (PLAYFULLY SLAPS HIM BEHIND AND HUGS HIM)
Run along and play.

BILLY: (LAUGHING) Hah!! Mum, 'ow long's dad been at the war?

SALLY: Two year.

BILLY: And we ain't seed 'im all that time.

SALLY: No, but we'll see 'im to-day!

BILLY: Think 'e'll recernise me wiv the way I've growed?

SALLY: No'rarf! You're the dead spit of 'im!

BILLY: Wot time's 'e comin'?

SALLY: We got to meet 'im at the station at four o'clock. (LOOKS AT CLOCK) 'Ere, we'll 'ave to git a move on.

BILLY: Well, I'm ready!

SALLY: Oh no, you ain't: you got to git into yer new togs.

BILLY: (EXCITEDLY) New togs, mum?

SALLY: Yus, wot I bought special for the occasion.

BILLY: Where are they?

SALLY: On yer bed – (POINTING L.) Yer’ll find a new pair o’ round-me’s, and a new pair o’ daisies. Go and put ‘em on while I lay the Cain-an’-Abel so’s yer dad won’t ‘ave to wait for ‘is Rosy-Lee.

BILLY: Ri’ro, mum! I’m picking up the Germans. First aid to the wounded enemy.

(BILLY RUNS INTO ROOM L.)

(SALLY TAKES WHITE TABLECLOTH FROM DRESSER, AND LAYS IT ON TABLE L.C. THEN SHE PROCEEDS TO PREPARE TEA-THINGS AND LAY TABLE. KETTLE, TEA-POT, JAM, BUTTER, BREAD, ETC. ALL IN EVIDENCE. SHE CONTINUES CONVERSATION WITH BILLY ALL THE TIME, HE SHOUTING HIS ANSWERS FROM THE ROOM L. IN WHICH HE IS DRESSING.)

SALLY: Billy.

BILLY: Yus, mum.

SALLY: Wot d’yer think I got for yer dad’s tea?

BILLY: Wot, mum?

SALLY: Winkles!

BILLY: Garn!

SALLY: Straight! And two ounces o’ real butter!

BILLY: Lumme!

SALLY: An’ wot d’yer think I got for ‘is supper?

BILLY: Peas-pudden an’ safyloys!

SALLY: No! Pigs’ trotters an’ faggits!

BILLY: Crikey!

SALLY: An’ wot d’yer think I got for ‘is dinner tomorrer?

BILLY: Boiled beef an’ carrots!

SALLY: No!

BILLY: Wot then?

SALLY: Roast pork an' suety pudden'!

BILLY: Lumme! I'll 'ave a bit o' cracklin'!

SALLY: And I'll tell yer a secret, Billy.

BILLY: Wot, mum?

SALLY: Yer won't tell none o' the CUSTOMERS, will yer?

BILLY: No, mum!

SALLY: I've saved up sich a treat for yer dad!

BILLY: Wot?

SALLY: Three big taters!

BILLY: Struf!

(HE RE-ENTERS FROM L. WEARING A PAIR OF PATENT BOOTS WITH FAWN CLOTH UPPERS AND A PAIR OF BELL-BOTTOM TROUSERS TRIMMED WITH VELVET AND HIGHLY ADORNED WITH PEARLIES)

SALLY: Let's 'ave a look at yer.

BILLY: Mum, twig the bell-bots?

SALLY: (GOING TO CHEST OF DRAWERS) Now I got somethink else for yer.

BILLY: (EXCITEDLY) Wot, mum?

SALLY: (TAKING FROM DRAWER A COSTER'S STRIPED JERSEY) 'Ere, put this on. (SHE HELPS HIM INTO IT) Wait a minute! Yer arm through there, now the other one, and now yer 'ead through 'ere! (SHE PULLS JERSEY DOWN) That's it!

BILLY: Mum, I got more stripes'n dad now!

SALLY: Come 'ere. (TAKES OUT WAISTCOAT TO MATCH TROUSERS) now for yer Jim Prescott. (HELPS HIM INTO WAISTCOAT)

BILLY: Ooooh! I ain't 'arf a toff!

SALLY: (TAKING OUT A RICHLY MULTI-COLOURED SILK HANDKERCHIEF) ‘Ere, ‘ere’s somethink to put round yer bushel-and-peck. (SHE PUTS IT ROUNDHIS NECK AND KNOTS IT CHARACTERISTICALLY)

BILLY: ‘T’s a lovely nankerchief!

SALLY: (PATTING THE KNOT) There! (SHE TAKES OUT COAT) And now for yer I’m afloat. Wha’ d’yer think of it? (HOLDING IT UP FOR HIS INSPECTION) (IT IS THE REAL THING IN COSTER CUT, VELVET TRIMMING AND PEARLY ADORNMENT)

BILLY: Abserlootly champion!

SALLY: Put it on. (SHE HELPS HIM INTO IT)

BILLY: Mum, do I look the goods?

SALLY: All but yer Barnet-fair!

BILLY: Wot’s the marrer wiv it?

SALLY: You ain’t done yer quiff! (TAKES COMB FROM HER HAIR) Come ‘ere! (SHE GOES TO KETTLE)

BILLY: (FOLLOWING HER) Goin’ to put some ‘air-oil on it?

SALLY: (POURING A LITTLE WATER FROM KETTLE INTO THE PALM OF HER HAND) No, a drop of Adam’s ale. (RUBS THE WATER ON THE TOP OF HIS HEAD, AND THEN COMBS THE HAIR DOWN)

BILLY: Git the partin’ straight.

SALLY: Keep still. (SHE SMOOTHES THE HAIR ON HIS FOREHEAD AND MAKE S HIM A QUIFF)

BILLY: Got the quiff right?

SALLY: Yus. (GOES BACK TO DRAWERS AND TAKES OUT A LITTLE WHITE BILLYCOCK HAT WITH A SMALL FEATHER STUCK IN THE SIDE OF THE BAND.) And ‘ere’s yer tit-for-tat!

BILLY: (TAKING IT FROM HER) Oooh! The cady!

SALLY: Stick it on yer napper.

BILLY: (JAUNTILY POPPING IT ON TO HIS HEAD, HE GIVES IT A SAUCY SIDE TILT, STICKS HIS THUMBS INTO HIS WAISTCOAT ARM-HOLES AND PUTS HIS RIGHT FOOT FORWARD, HEEL DOWN AND TOE POINTED UP.) ‘Ow do I go? (SWAGGERS ACROSS THE ROOM WITH A COCKNEY STRUT) Mum, wot price ‘Ampstead ‘Eath in this lot?

SALLY: Let’s ‘ave a squint at yer.

BILLY: (POSING) Wot'll dad say when 'e sees me in these.

SALLY: 'E'll go potty! Ain't I goin' to 'ave a kiss for 'em?

BILLY: Raarver! (RUNS TO HER. SHE CATCHES HIM UP. THEY KISS)

(BUS:)

BILLY: Mind, Mum, don't rumple my quiff!

SALLY: (SETS HIM DOWN) And now we got to git the moke ready. (SHOUTS THROUGH DOOR R.) Jim, send Banana in!

BILLY: Is Banana comin' to the station too?

SALLY: O' course! 'E's takin' us both in the barrer, and then 'e's fetchin' us 'ome in state wiv yer dad.

BILLY: (BESIDE HIMSELF WITH GLEE) Good ole Banana!

(ENTER BANANA, THE DONKEY, THROUGH DOOR R. SALLY GOES TO HIM AND PUTS HER ARMS ROUND HIS NECK)

SALLY: Come on Banana! Come on, ole man! (SHE LEADS HIM TO C. AND THERE TALKS TO HIM.) To-day's the day, Banana, wot yer master's comin' 'ome on leave. I wonder if yer'll remember 'im arter two year in the trenches.

BILLY: Banana, 'ave a screw at the clobber! (STRUTS AROUND)

SALLY: Banana, 'ave a screw at the swank!

BILLY: Mum, Banana's jealous!

SALLY: Well, 'e ain't got no cause to be.

BILLY: Ain't 'e?

SALLY: No! (SHOUTS TO JIM, OFF R.) Jim, fetch in Banana's new 'arness.

BILLY: New 'arness, Mum?

SALLY: Well, yer didn't think I could let Banana meet yer dad in the old 'arness wot's wore out. I bought this new 'un cheap and I trimmed it up meself.

(ENTER JIM WITH A BOX WHICH SHE TAKES FROM HIM. JIM IS MIDDLE-AGED, AND IS DRESSED LIKE A MARKET MAN. HE IS GOING BACK TO THE YARD WHEN BILLY SPEAKS TO HIM AND HE STOPS.)

BILLY: Jim, 'ave a liker! (POSES. JIM PUTS HANDS TO KNEES AND REGARDS BILLY.) Wot d'yer think of 'em?

JIM: Spiffin'!

SALLY: (TAKING OUT OF BOX A DONKEY'S EAR-BONNET WITH LITTLE CENTRE CAP, ALL ADORNED WITH PEARLIES AND HOLDING THEM OUT TO BILLY) And wot do you think o' these?

BILLY: Is that for Banana?

SALLY: Yus, 'elp me to put it on 'im.

(BILLY GOES TO HER. JIM GOES OFF R.)

BILLY: Is it 'is 'at?

SALLY: That goes 'is yers! Like that! (ENCASING BANANA'S EARS) All right, Banana, ole man. That one in there. (BUS) and that one in there, and there y'are!

(BANANA'S EARS ARE NOW ENCASED, AND THE CENTRE CAP RESTS BETWEEN THEM LIKE A SUN BONNET. ON THE PEAK OF THE CAP THE NAME "BANANA" IS WORKED IN PEARLIES.)

BILLY: Mum, 'e ain't done 'is quiff!

SALLY: TAKING COMB FROM HER HAIR AND COMBING OUT BANANA'S FORELOCK) Garn! 'E don't 'ave a quiff, 'e 'as a fringe.

BILLY: Then yer better git 'im a fringe-net!

SALLY: (TAKING FROM BOX A HARNESS-COLLAR WHICH IS STUDDERED WITH LARGE PEARLIES) Now for 'is 'arf-a-dollar. (SHE PUTS IT ON BANANA.) 'Old 'ard, Banana! (TO BILLY) Wot d'yer think o' that?

BILLY: It's a miv!

SALLY: (TAKING OUT BRIDLE, WHICH ALSO IS FULL OF PEARLIES) An' 'ere's 'is bridle!

BILLY: Banana, fust prize on May the fust!

SALLY: 'Old still, Banana! Git 'old o' the strap, Billy. In there! (BUS) An' there we are!

BILLY: Banana, me an' you for Epsom!

SALLY: 'Ow do 'e look?

BILLY: Spiffin'!

(SHE STEPS BACK TO EXAMINE BANANA, BILLY DOES THE SAME. THEN, WITH A CHUCKLE, SHE THROWS HER ARMS ROUND THE DONKEY'S NECK AND KISSES HIM.)

SALLY: (TO BILLY) Some donkey, eh, Billy!

BILLY: (JUBILANTLY) The best little donkey in the world. (STARTS SINGING)

"Oh, I 'ad a donkey, 'e wouldn't go!"

(AS HE CONTINUES THE DITTY HE DOES A STEP TO IT. SALLY IS CAUGHT UP IN THE SPIRIT OF IT AND JOINS IN WITH HIM. THEY SING AND STEP WITH BANANA BETWEEN THEM, DO A JIG CROSS ON THE LAST LINE, LOOK AT EACH OTHER AS THEY FINISH, AND LAUGH TOGETHER AS THEY CUDDLE THE MOKE.)

SALLY: Ain't we makin' sillies of ourselves!

BILLY: Not 'arf!

SALLY: (TAKING THE REST OF THE HARNESS AND GIVING IT TO BILLY) Take 'im out to Jim an' tell 'im to get the barrer ready. I'll come an' put 'im the shafts meself when I'm dressed.

BILLY: (HOLDING HARNESS ON RIGHT ARM AND BRIDLE OF BANANA WITH THE LEFT) You got new togs too, Mum?

SALLY: (WHO HAS GONE TO CHEST OF DRAWERS) I should shay sho!

BILLY: Come on, Banana!

(BILLY LEADING HIM OUT THROUGH DOOR R.)

SALLY: (TAKING OFF AND THROWING ASIDE HER APRON) Mind 'ow yer go! (UNHOOKING HER SKIRT AT BACK) I shan't be long! (SLIPS SKIRT DOWN AND STEPS OUT OF IT)

(CONVERSATION NOW PROCEEDS WITH BILLY OFF R. THE DOOR IS LEFT OPEN)

BILLY: Mum!

SALLY: (UNHOOKING BLOUSE AT BACK) Hallo!

BILLY: Jim says yer'll 'ave to 'urry up if yer want to be at the station in time to meet dad.

SALLY: (SLIPPING OFF BLOUSE) All right! I'm 'urryin' up!

BILLY: Time's gittin' on, yer know!

SALLY: (LETTING DOWN HER HAIR AS SHE GLANCES AT THE CLOCK) 'Smarvellous 'ow time flies! (COMBING OUT HER HAIR, THE COMB FINDS A KNOT) Oh, d---drat!

BILLY: Mum!

SALLY: (STICKING HAIR PINS IN HER MOUTH) What?

BILLY: Are yer nearly ready?

SALLY: (WITH MOUTH FULL OF HAIR PINS) I'm doin' my 'air!

BILLY: Doin' yer air?

SALLY: (COMBING IT OUT) M'm!

BILLY: Banana, that means an hour to wait!

SALLY: (AMUSED) Well, I got to do my 'air, ain't I?

BILLY: Yus, mum! Do yer quiff nice!

SALLY: (COMBING DOWN HER FRINGE) Quiff! Women don't 'ave a quiff!

BILLY: Then wot do they 'ave?

SALLY: A fringe!

BILLY: Oh, like Banana!

SALLY: (ROLLING BACK HAIR ROUND HER FINGERS AND UP, AND THEN PINNING IT WITH HAIR PINS SHE TAKES FROM HER MOUTH) I'll gi' you like Banana, if I come out there! (SHE SAYS THIS WITH A SMILE, AS THOUGH AMUSED AT HIS PRECOCITY)

BILLY: 'Urry up, Mum!

SALLY: Don't be so impatient!

BILLY: It ain't me wot's impatient, Mum.

SALLY: Then who is it?

BILLY: Banana!

SALLY: Wot's the marrer wiv Banana?

BILLY: 'E's swishin' 'is rudder about!

SALLY: (COMBING DOWN CHARACTERISTIC SIDE FRINGE) Well, I got to do my side bits. Yer dad loves to see me wiv my side bits on.

BILLY: You ought to see the side Banana's puttin' on!

SALLY: (PUTTING FINISHING TOUCH TO HER HAIR AND SURVEYING HERSELF IN THE MIRROR) There!

BILLY: Is it done?

SALLY: (GOING TO DRAWER) Yus!

BILLY: Thank Gord!

SALLY: (BUSY AT DRAWERS) You little monkey!

BILLY: Do you mean me, Mum?

SALLY: Who else d'yer think I mean?

BILLY: Banana!

SALLY: No, I don't mean Banana! 'E's not a monkey!

BILLY: No, 'e's a donkey!

(SALLY LAUGHS AS SHE TAKES DRESS FROM DRAWER AND SHAKES IT OUT. IT IS A COAT-FROCK, SUCH AS IS NOW FASHIONABLE, MADE OF BLUE SATIN MATERIAL AND TRIMMED WITH VELVET AND PEARLIES)

Wot yer doin' now, Mum?

SALLY: (PUTTING ON DRESS) Gittin' into my dress.

BILLY: Do it sharp!

SALLY: Wot's yer 'urry?

BILLY: I tell yer it ain't me, it's Banana!

SALLY: Wot's the marrer wiv 'im?

BILLY: 'E says 'e can't wait much longer.

SALLY: (NOW IN DRESS AND DOING IT UP) Well, 'e's got to wait! (A SLIGHT PAUSE, WHILE SHE GOES ON FASTENING DRESS)

BILLY: Mum!

SALLY: Wot?

BILLY: Want me to do yer dress up at the back?

SALLY: No, it does up at the front.

BILLY: Does up at the front?

SALLY: Yes, at the front!

BILLY: It must be a war dress!

SALLY: (HAVING DONE UP DRESS, SHE GOES TO THE DRAWERS AGAIN AND PUTS ON SILK HANDKERCHIEF) You are a nut!

BILLY: : But I ain't cracked, like Banana!

(SALLY NOW TAKES THE HUGE HAT BOX FROM TOP OF CHEST OF DRAWERS AND EXTRACTS FROM INSIDE IT A VERITABLE CREATION IN HATS ADORNED WITH WONDERFUL PEARLIES AND MOUNTAINOUS FEATHERS)

Wot yer doin' now, Mum?

SALLY: (PUTTING HAT ON HEAD BEFORE MIRROR) Puttin' on my 'at.

BILLY: is it a new 'un?

SALLY: Yus.

BILLY: Banana, another two hours to wait.

SALLY: (STRUGGLING TO STICK IN HAT PINS) Well!!! I'll make it 'ot for you when I come out there!

BILLY: Banana, you'll cop it!

(SALLY IS NOW RESPLENDENT AND TAKES UP A PAIR OF GLOVES. SHE TURNS TOWARDS DOOR R. WHEN THERE IS A RAT-TAT ON THE COUNTER IN SHOP. SHE OPENS DOOR C. – A POSTMAN STANDS IN DOORWAY.)

POSTMAN: Good afternoon, Missus. Letter! (HE HANDS HER LETTER)

SALLY: (TAKING LETTER) Thanks. (SHE LOOKS AT LETTER, PUZZLED AND APPREHENSIVE)

POSTMAN: Good afternoon, Missus.

(MUSIC PP. SALLY IS ABSORBED IN CONTEMPLATING ENVELOPE AND DOES NOT REPLY TO POSTMAN. HE GOES, CLOSING DOOR.)

SALLY: (WITH EYES ON LETTER) It's from Bill. (SHE OPENS ENVELOPE, TAKES OUT CONTENTS, UNFOLDS AND READS)

(NOTE: IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THIS LETTER TO BE READ WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT SHE ALMOST HAS TO SPELL THE WORDS BEFORE SAYING THEM. ONLY THE SUGGESTION MIND. HER READING WILL THUS ADD TO THE SIMPLICITY OF THE LETTER. THERE SHOULD BE THE HALF-HALTING TONE OF THE CHILD WHO HAS BUT RECENTLY LEARNED TO READ.)

(READING) "Dear wife, I write you these few lines as it leaves me at present to tell yer that I'm sorry to tell yer I ain't comin' 'ome on leave arter all. (PUTTING HER HAND TO HER BREAST AND EXCLAIMING) Oh Gord! (A PAUSE. HER EYES BLINK. SHE MOVES SLOWLY TO CHAIR AND SITS.)

BILLY: Mum, Banana's rudder says you're to 'urry up!

(DAZED, SHE LOOKS IN THE DIRECTION OF BILLY'S VOICE, AND THEN TURNS TO LETTER AGAIN. EYEING THE PAPER A MOMENT, SHE READS HALF MECHANICALLY)

SALLY: (READING) "Dear wife, I write you these few lines as it leaves me at present to tell yer that I'm sorry to tell yer I ain't comin' 'ome on leave arter all As I 'ave give up my leave to a bloke wot's got 'is muvver wot's a-dyin' up the Ole Kent Road way An' I thought as 'e got more right to leave than wot I got Along of 'is poor ole muvver wot's a-dyin' An' I give up my leave to 'im See! So I 'ope, Sal, ole darlin' As you won't take it to 'eart too much Me not comin' 'ome on leave As I done it for the best An' right's right arter allI didn't want to do it but I 'ad to Cos I couldn't bear to fink of 'is pore ole muvver adyin' up the Ole Kent Road way wivout seein' each uvver There's sich a lot o' people dyin' lately, it's a fair knock out I'm so sorry Sally As you won't see me now. An' I won't see you An' Billy An' Banana I couldn't 'elp awishin' as this bloke's pore muvver could 'ave put off adyin' at sich a orkward moment Till arter I 'ad my leave like An' then I thought that if I'd 'ad my leave I couldn't a' give it up to this bloke to go an' see 'is muvver wot's adyin' an' some'ow that woulnd't a' bin fair, would it? So as they couldn't spare us both ... (SHE DASHES AWAY A TEAR) so as they couldn't spare us both I give up my leave to 'im so's 'e could go up the Ole Kent Road way to see 'is pore ole muvver afore she died See? Fritz an' us is still 'ammerin' away

But I'll see yer arter the war's over if not afore Please Gord My love to yer
Sally Me darlin' ole wife ... An' also my love to little Billy An' my kind regards
to ole Banana,

Buck up, ole girl, and carry on, from yer lovin' 'usband, Bill."

BILLY: Mum, 'urry up, or we'll be too late.

(HER ARMS GLIDE ACROSS THE TABLE, SHE DROPS HER HEAD INTO THEM
AND SOBS)

BILLY: Mum, if you don't 'urry up (HE RE-ENTERS) we won't meet dad. (HE STARES AT HER
IN SURPRISE AS SHE SLOWLY RAISES HER HEAD)

SALLY: We won't meet dad 'owever much I 'urry up.

BILLY: Why not?

SALLY: Cos Dad ain't comin' arter all.

(A DEAD PAUSE WHILE THE FACT TAKES HOLD OF BILLY'S MIND. THEN HE
EXCLAIMS HALF IN A WHISPER AND ALMOST IN A SOB)

BILLY: Steroof!

SALLY: (WITH TEAR-FILLED EYES, HOLDS OUT HER ARMS TO HIM, INVITINGLY) Billy.

(HE GOES INTO HER ARMS. SHE HOLDS HIM CLOSE AND WEEPS)

BILLY: Don't cry, Mummy dear.

SALLY: (CHOKING) I Ain't Cryin', Billy.

BILLY: Why ain't dad a-comin'?

SALLY: 'Cos 'e can't be spared.

BILLY: Can't be spared, Mum?

SALLY: No.

BILLY: If I was you, I'd write to the gov'ment about it.

SALLY: It ain't the gov'ment's fault.

BILLY: Then whose fault is it?

SALLY: Some bloke's muvver wot's a-dyin' up the Ole Kent Road way.

BILLY: Well, when will dad come 'ome?

SALLY: Some day, Billy - if 'e's spared.

BILLY: Then ain't we goin' to the station?

SALLY: There ain't nothink to go for.

BILLY: We're all dressed up and nowhere to go.

(SHE HUGS HIM AND SOBS AFRESH)

Mummy dear, don't cry.

SALLY: (HOLDING HIM CLOSE) No, Billy, no.

BILLY: 'Cos if you cry, I'll 'ave to cry.

SALLY: No, don't you cry, Billy, boy.

BILLY: No; I'm a little soldier, an' soldiers mustn't cry. Besides, Banana'd be awful upset to see us both cryin', wouldn't he?

SALLY: Pore ole Banana.

BILLY: I s'pose we'd better take off our new togs.

SALLY: Yus, Billy, we got to save 'em up ... wait for when yer dad coms 'ome.

BILLY: An' while we're waitin' wot we goin' to do?

SALLY: Wot yer farver tells us to do.

BILLY: An' wot's that, Mum?

SALLY: Why, buck up and Carry on.

(MUSIC SWELLS)

(ENTER BANANA. HE COMES TO THEM. SHE HOLDS BILLY IN LEFT ARM AND PUTS RIGHT ARM ROUND BANANA'S NECK.

(MUSIC FF)

CURTAIN .

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